



Newsroom

EXCLUSIVE

Photo Bill Oliver of Agua Caliente

Tribe eyes mobile wallet that could be 'a gamechanger' for the casino industry



Buck Wargo, CDC Gaming Reports • November 14, 2019 at 3:45 pm

NASHVILLE – A California tribal casino is looking to take the lead in Indian gaming with technology that allows customers to make electronic payments through their smartphones for slot play. The goal is to extend it to more players and eventually to table games.

Agua Caliente Chief Information Officer Bill Oliver said use of mobile wallet technology could generate additional revenue for casinos by making it easier for customers to access cash.

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, who operate two resorts in the Palm Springs area, is working with several gaming equipment vendors in developing the mobile wallet.

During a discussion at TribalNet, Oliver said Agua Caliente would offer the mobile wallet to all guests, pending changes in California regulatory rules requiring extensive paperwork of background on customers before they can use the wallet.

"I do believe this is the future of payments and is going to be huge for the industry," Oliver said. "I believe that one day you're not going to have a credit card in your pocket. I do believe the mobile wallet will become the casino standard, and the payment processing will work itself out. It's not because we want it but because consumers are going to want it."

Under the plan, customer funds go into a prepaid card into the resort's mobile wallet. A player utilizes the app to load money onto a game. Oliver said banking laws and Federal Wire Act

There are many processes the casino has to undertake due to the inability for banks to have funds tapped into for directly for gaming use because of banking laws and the Wire Act.

"It would start with slots only," Oliver said. "In the future it would be table games and non-gaming. I know there's even a wallet out there to be able to tap funds for table games. This is going to be one of the most significant things in our industry as long as the adoption process is correct and follow your local gaming commission and state law."



Oliver said there are regulatory obstacles for a mobile wallet even for non-gaming because it uses redemption of points and free cash play for loyalty programs.

"People transfer funds just like that easily today. It's going to the casinos, but it's just how is it going to get there," Oliver said. "I am one of those ones who want to do it now."

The goal for use of digital wallets is to increase revenue, but Oliver said there are some obstacles because older customers who are a big part of the gaming floor don't readily adapt such technology.

"They don't feel safe by putting their financial information on a phone," Oliver said. "It's not different with a credit card. This is actually more secure. It's easy for me, but not for my 74-year-old mother, and she's the type who gambles in the casino."

A way to overcome that is to create incentives such as free play, Oliver said. Players already have the ability to use their smartphone to serve as a player card when they play a slot machine.

TribalNet CEO Mike Day said the advancement of e-wallet technology will be the next major cashless shift. Customers are already familiar with similar technology from other industries and applications, minimizing the learning and adoption curve.

"I applaud the organizations and forward-thinking regulators that do the work to create a customer friendly solution that allows easy electronic mobile account funding and payment and moving past

ticket in-ticket out and bill validators into a true fully cashless solution," Day said. "The world around us is investing in cashless, and a growing percent of our customers desire it. We should all encourage the organizations that are leading the way to fully cashless solutions."

6236 W. Desert Inn Road, Suite 100
Las Vegas, NV 89146
(702) 664-2121
info@cdcgamingreports.com

Editorial policy and Terms of use
Copyright © 2019, CDC Gaming Reports

